

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5424

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0658

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MT

SUBJ: CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

REF: VALLETTA 162

1. MINTOFF APPEARS TO BE LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR IMMINENT ACTION TO CHANGE CONSTITUTION. SPEAKING TO MLP RALLY MARCH 31, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY WISTIN ABELS WARNED THAT GOM WOULD "TACKLE THE CONSTITUTION" AFTER BUDGET DEBATE WAS OVER. HE ALSO SAID THAT GOM WOULD ESTABLISH A STRONG POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH WOULD NOT BE CHANGED REGARDLESS OF WHICH PARTY WOULD BE IN POWER. AT RALLY APRIL 7, LABOR MP BALDACCHINO CALLED ON LABORITES TO SUPPORT GOM ONN CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, AND LABOR MIN CASSAR SAID THAT NOW THAAT BUDGET DEBATE WAS OVER, GOM WOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE CONSTITUTION. HE ANNOUNCED THAT A MOTION TO CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION WOULD BE DISCUSSED DURING THE ANNUAL MLP GENERAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD APRIL 19-21. CASSAR ALSO TOOK THE OCCASION TO STATE THAT THE MALTA TELEVISION WAS ALSO ON GOM'S "LIST." "WE DO NOT WANT SUCH AN IMPORTANT MEDIUM TO BE RUN BY FOREIGNERS."

2. TIMES OF MALTA (CONS-IND) MADE STRONG EDITORIAL ATTACK ON
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ABELA'S REMARKS AND MAINTAINED THAT "TRUNING ON THE CON-

STITUTION AFTER THE BUDGET IS NO THE WAY TO INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF MALTA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM. WITHOUT THIS CONFIDENCE, DEVELOPMENT INEVITABLY SUFFERS."

3. COMMENT: IT SEEMS INEVITABLE THAT MINTOFF WILL NOW FOLLOW THROUGH ON HIS TREATS TO ALTER MALTA'S CONSTITUTION REGARDLESS OF SOME OF ITS PROVISIONS FOR A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY AND OF THE POSITION OF THE NATIONALIST OPPOSITION. THE MOTION ON THE CONSTITUTION AT THE MLP ANNUAL CONFERENCE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE PASSED WITH A VERY SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY, POSSIBLY BY ACCLAMATION, THUS TYING LABOR GOM MORE FIRMLY TO ITS ANNOUNCED INTENTIONS.

4. THE NATIONALISTS ARE IN A POOR POSITION. BY REFUSING TO COOPERATE WITH LABOR GOM, WHEN EVERYONE KNOWS (AND THEY ADMIT) THAT THEY AGREE WITH LABOR AT LEAST ON CERTAIN ISSUES (VOTE AT 18 AND ELIMINATION OF POSITION OF VICE PRESIDENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL COURT), THE NOT ONLY APPEAR FOOLISH, BUT PROVIDE MINTOFF WITH A CERTAIN AURA OF LEGITIMACY IN TAKING UNCONSTITUTIONAL ACTION, AND LOSE ANY MODERATING INFLUENCE THEY MIGHT HAVE WHEN THESE CHANGES ARE MADE.GETZ

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